A Sickle Leonid.

AT 2h. 17m. on Sunday morning, December 21, I witnessed the passage of a swift, streak-leaving meteor, magnitude 1, duration about 0·75 second. It proceeded from γ of Cancer and disappeared near to λ of Gemini. On tracing its path backward, I found its radiant to be in the well-known Sickle of Leo.
G. MCKENZIE KNIGHT.

25 Holford Square, London, W.C.

THE BABYLONIAN AND ASSYRIAN LEGENDS OF THE CREATION.[1]

IT is now a little more than thirty years ago since the learned world was startled by the announcement that Assyriologists had discovered a remarkable version of the history of the Creation, which closely resembled the narrative of the first chapter of the Book of Genesis, and appeared to be based upon the archetype from which one of the earliest editors or writers of the Pentateuch drew many of his statements. The interest shown in the discovery of the Babylonian and Assyrian account of the Creation was widespread, and though it did not equal that displayed by the learned world in the story of the Deluge as unfolded from the cuneiform records by the late Mr. George Smith, it was sufficiently important to move Assyriologists to further exertions and to provide them with a public which has been ever ready to welcome the results of their labours with toleration and praise. The credit of the discovery of the cuneiform Creation records in the British Museum belongs, undoubtedly, to Sir Henry Rawlinson, and it must even be a subject for lament that his official occupations prevented him from laying his work before the world in a suitable manner many years before his assistant, Mr. George Smith, was able to do so. In the preface to the work before us, Mr. L. W. King, of the British Museum, has continued, and, we are glad to add, completed, as far as is possible at present, the work which was begun by Sir Henry Rawlinson, and he presents to us the whole of the available material in a form handy to use and easy to study.

The first volume of the "Seven Tablets of Creation" contains a useful preface, a good introduction, and transliterations into English letters of all the cuneiform texts, with clear translations arranged opposite them; five appendices, an index and a glossary complete the volume. In the second half of the work, we have the original cuneiform texts, and as they are written in a good, bold hand, the curious reader will find no difficulty in verifying any of Mr. King's statements. After sketching briefly the services which have been rendered by earlier editors of the Creation legends, Mr. King passes on to describe the new material which he has found as the result of several examinations of the collections of clay tablets from Kuyunjik now in the British Museum. In the thirteenth part of "Cuneiform Texts," published by the Trustees of the British Museum in 1901, Mr. King gave copies of a number of documents relating to the Creation, among them being several which, though used by previous workers, had not been published, and one which had been consulted by Mr. Smith in 1876, but had been apparently lost sight of. Great credit is due to Mr. King for identifying this last-mentioned important fragment, for, so far as we have been able to discover, it was not recognised by Dr. Bezold, who, in his "Catalogue of the Konyunjik Collection" (p. 998, K. 9267), describes it merely as "part of a mythological legend." Whilst, however, Mr. King was searching for fragments of other Babylonian legends, he discovered so many new portions of the Creation legends and duplicates that he decided to write a monograph on the subject, and as the result of his labours we are now able to form a connected idea of the whole of the Babylonian story of the Creation. Formerly, only twenty-one tablets and fragments inscribed with portions of the legend were known, but now no less than forty-nine separate tablets and fragments have been identified as containing portions of the cuneiform texts of the Creation series. In fact, Mr. King has identified twenty-eight new portions and duplicates of Creation texts, and the details of the great story can now be followed consecutively, a thing which, up to the present, has been impossible.

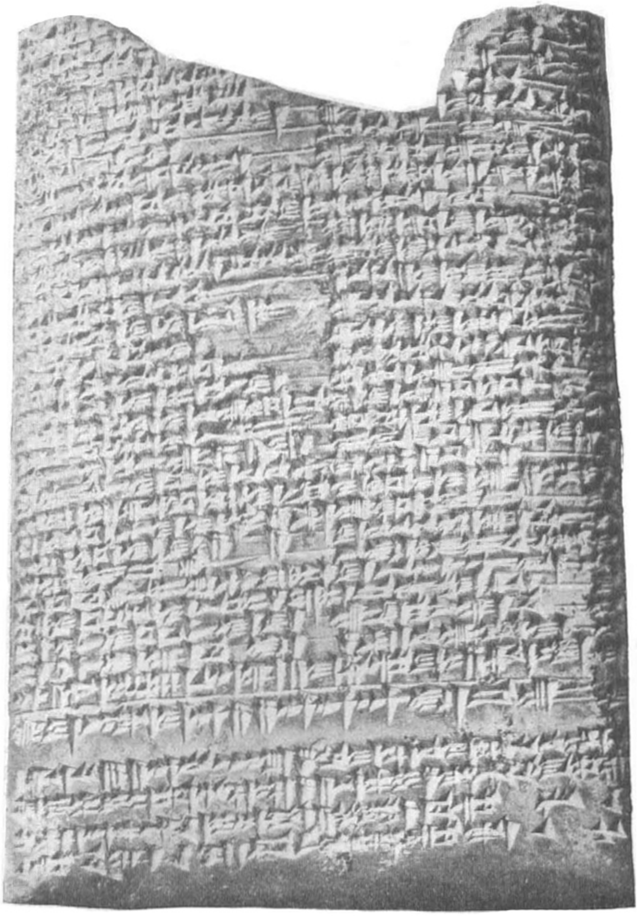

FIG. 1.—Part of the Fourth Tablet of the Creation Series (Brit. Mus., No. 93,016).

We now know that the great Babylonian poem of Creation was divided into seven sections, or tablets, and that the whole work was known by the title "Enuma Elish," which also forms the opening words of the text, and that it contained nine hundred and ninety-four lines; those who are interested in ancient theories of numbers will note that 994 is a multiple of 7. Each of the seven sections on tablets contained, on an average, one hundred and forty lines, and it is clear that each tablet was intended to describe the events of one "day" of creation. It is difficult not to think that such artificial divisions of the legend indicate that we are dealing with a comparatively late recension of it, and this may well be the case when we remember that the oldest copies of it which we possess date from the reign of Ashur-bani-pal (B.C. 668-626); no one who takes the trouble to read the seven tablets and who is familiar with ancient cosmogonies and theogonies will have the slightest doubt that

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[1] "The Seven Tablets of Creation." By L. W. King. Vol. i. English translations. Pp cxxiv + 274. Vol. ii. Pp. xiii and 84 plates. (London: Luzac, 1902.)

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the original form of the Babylonian and Assyrian history of Creation is many thousands of years old. Whether it originated with the Akkadians or some other non-Semitic people cannot be said definitely at present, but it is very probable that the Semitic Babylonians were only the borrowers and not the inventors of this remarkable work.

We may now note the main heads of the legend. At the beginning of all things, Apsū and Tiamat were water deities and typified chaos; to these were born Laḫmu and Lahamu, and later appeared Anshar and Kishar, and still later Anu and other gods came into being. One of the newly-found fragments of the first tablet mentions the birth of Nudimmud (Ea), and although Damascius states that Bēl, the creator of the world, was the son of Ea and Damkina (Ἀός, Δαύκη), it is clear from the fragment that Marduk, who is made to take the leading part in the later tablets of Creation, was supposed to be in existence, like Mummu and Gaga. In the earlier episodes of the Creation story, it is Ea and not Marduk who is the hero, and we learn for the first time, from the new material, that it was Apsū, a god of chaos, and not Tiamat who rebelled against the gods. Apsū disliked the new order of things and the creation of the universe for the simple reason that the beings who formed members of the new world disturbed his peace and rest; as soon as he had made up his mind as to what was likely to happen, he called Mummu his minister (the Μωϋμῖς of Damascius), and the two went to Tiamat and took counsel with her, and complained that "he could get rest neither by day nor by night." The putting of the house of the world into order by the gods destroyed his rest and peace of mind. Of the conflict which took place between Ea and Apsū and his ally Mummu we know little, but that the great god did not succeed in inflicting a decisive defeat on Apsū and his allies is clear from the fact that, later, Anshar found it necessary to exhort Marduk to do battle with Tiamat. Of the defeat and death of Tiamat we need say little, for the story of how the god of light slew her and split her body into halves is familiar to all. The actual account of the creation of the world by Marduk begins towards the end of the fourth tablet, where it is said that one-half of the body of Tiamat formed a covering for heaven, and that Marduk, having formed E-shara, made the great trinity of Anu, Bēl and Ea to dwell therein.

In the fifth tablet, we hear of the fixing of the constellations of the Zodiac, the founding of the year, &c., and it seems as if this section contained an account of the creation of vegetation. The sixth tablet, as we know from one of the new fragments, told the story of the creation of man, and it seems as if Marduk made man with the view both of punishing the gods and of providing a creature who should at all times worship him. Marduk, or Bēl, instructed Ea to cut off his (*i.e.* Marduk's) head, and man was formed out of the blood which flowed from the god's body. Marduk is made to tell Ea that he intends to create man from his own blood and from the "bone" which he will create; it is important to note that the Assyrian word for "bone" is *iṣṣimtu*, and that it is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew *'esem*, "bone," which occurs is Genesis ii. 23, in connection with the account of the creation of woman.

The creation of man was the final act of creation, and when this was accomplished the gods assembled in their council chamber in Upshukkinaku, with Marduk at their head, and they sang to him a hymn of praise, the text of which forms the seventh section of the Creation story and contains fifty addresses to the god. How Marduk managed to survive his decapitation is not told us, and we can only surmise that he met the gods in their council chamber in some sort of spiritual body. The space at our disposal will not allow us to call attention to many very interesting details of the legend, especially in the parallels which may be drawn between parts of it and the Book of Genesis; these prove beyond all reasonable doubt that the Jews borrowed large portions of their religious literature from their kinsmen the Babylonians, and that the seven days of Creation were imagined long before the days of the patriarch Abraham. The student of comparative folklore will find much to interest him in Mr. King's latest work, and will perhaps trace the mingling of legends illustrated in it with somewhat mixed feelings. Mr. King's texts are carefully edited and well copied, and his translations, which we have examined in several passages, are faithful and not unduly literal, and his work is a credit to English Assyriology.

A POT OF BASIL.

THERE is a widely spread belief, both amongst natives and amongst the white sojourners in Western Africa, that the presence of a certain species of plant in a room drives away mosquitos, and, in fact, a single plant is said to be sufficient to clear a room. On his recent return from Northern Nigeria, Major J. A. Burdon, of the Cameron Highlanders, brought with him and gave to me a few leaves of this plant. These, through the kindness of Mr. H. H. W. Pearson, have been identified by the experts at Kew as belonging to *Ocimum viride*, Willd., a member of the order Labiatæ, which occurs from Senegambia southwards to Angola.

Major Burdon, who is Resident of the Nupe Province, Northern Nigeria, and Hausa Scholar of Christ's College, Cambridge, has given me the following account of the plant:—

"A fragment of what turns out to be *Ocimum viride* was given me in August last at Lokoja, Northern Nigeria, by Captain H. D. Larymore, C.M.G., R.A., Resident of the Kabba Province. Capt. Larymore's notice had been drawn to the plant by a native living in a low-lying part of the native town at Lokoja, who had told him that the natives suffered very little from the swarms of mosquitos which existed in that part, as they protected themselves from them by the use of this plant.

"Capt. Larymore made inquiries and obtained a few specimens of the plant, which grows wild, though not very abundantly, in the neighbourhood of Lokoja. These specimens he planted in pots and boxes and kept in and about his house. The specimens I saw were about the size of a geranium.

"He informed me that the presence of one of these plants in a room undoubtedly drove the mosquitos out, and that by placing three or four of the plants round his bed at night he was able to sleep unmolested without using a mosquito net. This is very strong testimony to the efficacy of the plant, for the house in which Capt. Larymore was living is, as I had cause to know well in former years, infested with mosquitos."

In the fifth volume of Sir W. T. Thiselton-Dyer's "Flora of Tropical Africa," *Ocimum viride* is described as follows:—

"*O. viride*, Willd.; Benth. in DC. Prod. XII. 34. A perennial 3-6 ft. high, with much-branched glabrous stems. Leaves distinctly petioled, oblong, acute, membranous, 3-4 in. long, glabrous on both sides, or obscurely pubescent beneath. Racemes lax, copiously panicled, 3-6 in. long; rhachis finely pubescent; bracts deciduous; pedicels not very short. Calyx $\frac{1}{6}$ in. long; tube campanulate; upper lobe orbicular, as long as the tube; lower teeth short. Corolla half as long again as the calyx-lobes. Stamens but little exserted, the two upper with filaments toothed above the base.—Benth. in Hook. Niger Fl. 488; Henriques in Bolet Soc. Brot. X. 149. *O. febrifugum*, Lindl., in Bot. Reg. t. 753 *O. heptodon*, P. Beauv. Fl. Owar. II. 59. t. 94."

The plant is figured on plate 753 of the ninth volume

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